Claims

In the claims:

1. A method comprising:

determining whether a device is connected to a communications port of a messaging system;

receiving a data packet at the communications port;

determining a communications parameter set for the received packet;

analyzing the received packet data structure;

comparing the received packet data structure with a data structure for a known device; and

if the data structure of the packet matches that for the known device determining the device coupled to the communications port to be a known device.

2. The method of claim 1, wherein determining whether a device is connected comprises listening for data received at the communications port.

3. The method of claim 1, wherein determining whether a device is connected comprises sending a signal through the communications port and listening for a response.

4. The method of claim 3, wherein the sent signal comprises a startup packet structured according to a startup protocol of a known device and wherein listening for a response comprises listening for an expected acknowledgment signal in accordance with the startup protocol of the known device.

5. The method of claim 1, wherein determining a communications parameter set comprises applying a variety of baud rate and parity setting to the packet and selecting a baud rate and parity combination that is consistent with the packet.

6. The method of claim 1, wherein analyzing the received data structure comprises determining the value of data in a selected position in the packet.

7. The method of claim 6, wherein determining the value of data comprises determining the value of the byte in the first position of the packet and wherein comparing comprises comparing the value of the byte in position 1 to possible values for known devices.

8. The method of claim 7, further comprising determining the value of a byte in a second selected position and wherein comparing comprises comparing the value of the bytes in the first and the second selected position to possible combinations of values for known devices.

9. The method of claim 7, wherein comparing comprises comparing the value of the byte and the determined communications parameter set to possible combinations of values for known devices.

10. The method of claim 1, wherein comparing comprises applying a series of conditional branch instructions to determine a matching known device.

11. A method comprising:

selecting a set of communications parameters for a communications port of a messaging system;

sending a startup packet to the communications port using the selected parameters

listening for a response to the startup packet from the communications port;

if no response is received, selecting a different set of communications parameters and sending a startup packet using the different set of communications parameters.

if no response is received, repeating selecting a different set and sending a startup packet using the different set;

receiving a data packet at the communications port;

determining the set of communications parameters for the received packet;

applying a series of conditional tests to the data of the received packet to compare the received packet data structure with data structures for known devices; and

if the data structure of the packet matches that for a known device determining the device coupled to the communications port to be the matching known device.

12. The method of Claim 11 wherein selecting a set of communications parameters comprises selecting parameters from a list of parameters for devices that are likely to be coupled to the communications port.

13. The method of Claim 11 wherein applying a series of conditional tests comprises comparing a combination of communications parameter settings and data packet byte values to combinations for known devices.

14. A machine-readable medium having stored thereon data representing instructions which, when executed by a machine, cause the machine to perform operations comprising:

determining whether a device is connected to a communications port of a messaging system;

receiving a data packet at the communications port;

determining a communications parameter set for the received packet;

analyzing the received packet data structure;

comparing the received packet data structure with a data structure for a known device; and

if the data structure of the packet matches that for the known device determining the device coupled to the communications port to be a known device.

15. The medium of claim 14, wherein the instructions for determining whether a device is connected comprise instructions which, when executed by the machine, cause the machine to perform further operations comprising listening for data received at the communications port.

16. The medium of claim 14, wherein the instructions for determining whether a device is connected comprise instructions which, when executed by the machine, cause the machine to perform further operations comprising sending a startup packet structured according to a startup protocol of a known device through the communications port and listening for an expected acknowledgment signal in accordance with the startup protocol of the known device.

17. The medium of claim 14, wherein the instructions for analyzing the received data structure comprise instructions which, when executed by the machine, cause the machine to perform further operations comprising determining the value of data in a selected position in the packet.

18. The medium of claim 14, wherein the instructions for comparing comprise instructions which, when executed by the machine, cause the machine to perform further operations comprising applying a series of conditional branch instructions to determine a matching known device.

19. An apparatus comprising:

a communications port of a messaging system for sending and receiving packets between the messaging system and a connected device;

means for determining a communications parameter set for a packet received from a device connected to the communications port;

means for analyzing the received packet data structure;

means for comparing the received packet data structure with a data structure for a known device; and

means for determining the device coupled to the communications port to be a known device if the data structure of the packet matches that for the known device.

20. The apparatus of claim 19, wherein the means for determining whether a device is connected comprises means for listening for data received at the communications port.

21. The apparatus of claim 19, wherein the means for determining whether a device is connected comprises means for sending a signal through the communications port and means for listening for a response.

22. The apparatus of claim 19, wherein the means for determining a communications parameter set comprises means for applying a variety of baud rate and parity setting to the packet and selecting a baud rate and parity combination that is consistent with the packet.

23. The apparatus of claim 19, wherein the means for comparing comprises a series of conditional branch instructions for determining a matching known device.

24. The apparatus of claim 19 wherein the messaging system is a voice mail system.

25. A messaging system comprising:

a communications port for sending and receiving packets between the messaging system and a connected device;

a memory to store a set of data structures of known devices; and

a processor coupled to the port and the memory to analyze the data structure of a packet received at the communications port from a device connected to the communications port, to compare the received packet data structure with the stored known data structures, and to determine that the device coupled to the communications port is a known device if the data structure of the received packet matches that for the known device.

26. The system of claim 25, wherein the memory further stores communications parameter sets and wherein the processor applies a variety of baud rate

and parity setting to the packet to select a baud rate and parity combination that is consistent with the packet.

27. The system of claim 26, wherein the processor compares the value of a byte and the selected baud rate and parity combination to stored combinations of values for known devices.

28. The system of claim 25, wherein the processor executes a series of conditional branch instructions for determining a matching known device.